

Foundations

Like a house, a shed or gazebo needs a foundation to provide a sturdy base to build upon and to protect the structure from the damaging effects of moisture and soil. In some cases the foundation ties the building to the earth (an important requirement for umbrella-like gazebos) or keeps the building from shifting during seasonal freeze-thaw cycles.

You can build a shed with a variety of foundations; the most commonly used types are the wooden skid and the concrete slab. In addition to being far easier and cheaper to construct, a skid foundation allows you to move the shed if you need to. It also ensures—in most areas—that the building is classified as a temporary structure (see page 6). A

concrete slab, by contrast, gives you a nice, hard-wearing floor as well as an extremely durable foundation. But a concrete foundation means the building is considered “permanent,” which could affect the tax assessment of your property; you’ll also most likely need a permit for the project.

Gazebos must be securely anchored to the ground, as mentioned, and are typically built on concrete pier or slab foundations. For very small projects you probably won’t need a foundation—just make sure the base or posts that sit on the ground are made of rot-resistant lumber.

Wooden Skid Foundation

A skid foundation couldn’t be simpler: two or more treated wood beams or landscape timbers (typically 4 × 4, 4 × 6, or 6 × 6) set on a bed of gravel. The gravel provides a flat, stable surface that drains well to help keep the timbers dry. Once the skids are set, the floor frame is built on top of them and is nailed to the skids to keep everything in place.

Building a skid foundation is merely a matter of preparing the gravel base, then cutting, setting, and leveling the timbers. The timbers you use must be rated for ground contact. It is customary, but purely optional, to make angled cuts on the ends of the skids—these add a minor decorative touch and make it easier to *skid* the shed to a new location, if necessary.

Because a skid foundation sits on the ground, it is subject to slight shifting due to frost in cold-weather climates. Often a shed that has risen out of level will correct itself with the spring thaw, but if it doesn’t, you can lift the shed with jacks on the low side and add gravel beneath the skids to level it.

TOOLS & MATERIALS

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Shovel | Circular saw |
| Rake | Square |
| 4-ft. level | Treated wood timbers |
| Straight, 8-ft. 2 × 4 | Compactible gravel |
| Hand tamper | Wood sealer-preserved |



A. Excavate the building site and add a 4" layer of compactible gravel. Level, then tamp the gravel with a hand tamper or rented plate compactor (inset).